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Commission Chairman Hector Ramirez Heads to New York



First 5 California Commission Chairman Hector Ramirez announced he is leaving the state commission to take a position with the Northeast Parent and Child Society in Albany, New York.

Ramirez served as chair of the state commission since he was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in March 2006. Previously he was a Los Angeles-based executive management consultant for a number of nonprofit and public sector organizations. His other early professional experiences include working for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services and the Child Welfare League of America. Ramirez also served on several local, national and international committees, including the National Council of La Raza and several committee positions with the Child Welfare League of America.

Ramirez said he's excited about the new opportunity, but saddened at having to leave the commission behind.

"Chairing First 5 California has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences in my career," he said. "I am so proud of what we've accomplished in the past two years. But more so, I am looking forward to seeing how much can be achieved in the future, through the collective work of the state and county commissions."

The First 5 Commission thanks Chairman Ramirez for his service and commitment to children.

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First 5 Looks to the Future

The hard work of further defining First 5 California's legacy for young children and families is underway.

The challenging task, identified as an objective in First 5's recently implemented Strategic Plan, will help us identify two to three signature programs to implement as we look ahead in the face of declining revenues.

"This process will help us build our legacy for the future," said First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry. "We want the highest quality programs for children 0 to 5 to be the legacy of First 5. This bold task we are undertaking will help us focus on the future by building on the successes of our past."

First 5 California staff plan to present a high-level overview of the legacy workgroup process at the September 17 State Commission meeting.

To assist in the legacy workgroup's effort, First 5 enlisted the support of The Center for Collaborative Policy (Center), which strives to build the capacity of public agencies, stakeholders, and the public to work together to improve policy outcomes.

The signature programs and pilot projects First 5 California adopts as a result of the workgroup's efforts will reflect lessons learned from the vast array of programs it sponsored during the agency's first 10 years. In addition, the workgroup will tap into the knowledge and wisdom of local, state and national experts to identify best practices. The collective knowledge will help the workgroup create criteria for building future programs. Meetings are expected to begin late this year.

Additional information about the Center is available at <http://www.csus.edu/ccp/>.

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First 5 Meets Strategic Plan Goals

At the July 17 Commission meeting, Executive Director Kris Perry gave Commissioners their first mid-year report on the Strategic Plan. "It is imperative to connect the plan to the people," Perry said. "You can't implement a plan without everyone on board, and First 5 staff have embraced the Strategic Plan as a living document and an evolving process."

Perry introduced a new strategic plan tracking system which was rolled out in early June to manage plan activities. "It is intuitive, innovative and efficient and connects people to the plan through the program," Perry said. The system also has the ability to provide web-based reports in multiple formats.

Perry discussed accomplishments and the status of the 13 objectives scheduled for completion in 2008. Several activities in the plan are already complete with many accomplished early and some objectives to be performed each year.

Commissioner Carla Dartis asked if the objectives of the plan were too low or too high. "You set the bar high and we reached it," Perry said. "This was an enormous growth year and it was challenging."

As we reach more objectives, we can then examine setting higher goals for the future, she added. "First 5's commitment is to concurrently conduct and improve day-to-day operations and sustain and support those programs and objectives," she said. "We've accomplished a lot in a short period of time and we continue our commitment in our daily activities."

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Kit for New Parents Posters; Get Yours Today!



The long-awaited *Kit for New Parents* posters are now available for order on the ALOM Web site at <http://ccfc.alom.com>. Bilingual tear-off sheets, informing parents of the number to call for a *Kit*, are also in stock. The tear-off sheets attach directly to the poster. The posters can be distributed to doctor's offices, clinics or other areas where new or prospective parents can be found.

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Budget and Legislative Update

The state continues to operate without a budget for the new fiscal year. Although the Democrats in the Assembly and Senate have submitted a proposal to close the \$15 billion budget deficit, the plan, at this time, has no support from the Republican legislators. There is a constitutional provision that requires a 2/3 vote of both houses to pass a budget. As the legislative leaders continue to negotiate on the state budget, First 5 California has publically stated its intent to try and help the state during this fiscal crisis, while also upholding its voter mandate to protect the needs of California's youngest children.

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FY 2008-09 Disbursement Schedule

First 5 California is pleased to release the FY 2008-09 Disbursement Schedule which lists First 5 California's planned disbursements and reimbursements for this current year, along with a narrative description of the Disbursement Schedule. This schedule will assist county commissions in tracking fiscal and compliance report due dates, as well as planning for the

receipt of funds from First 5 California. The Schedule is available on the First 5 California Web site at <http://www.cfc.ca.gov/commission/fiscal.asp> Please share this information with your fiscal and program staff.

First 5 California plans to update this schedule on an annual basis. We welcome your feedback and recommendations for future improvements.

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Legislative Bills to Watch

First 5 California opposes SBX3 16. This bill is Senator Dave Cox's third legislative attempt to divert the Proposition 10 funding stream that is currently helping meet a wide variety of needs for children 0 to 5 and their families in the area of health, developmental screening and high-quality preschools. The provisions of this bill would, upon voter approval, redirect Prop 10 funds to the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families state General Fund programs. Senator Cox's two previous legislative attempts (SB 893 and SBX1 5) to redirect Proposition 10 funds, in 2007 and earlier this year, both failed passage in the Senate Health Committee.

First 5 California supports three bills which are consistent with the goals and priorities of its Strategic Plan.

SB 1298 (Simitian) would establish a commission to develop a statewide education information system. The data system would support program evaluation to help identify which programs are effective at improving different measures of student performance. It would also provide connections between K-12 and other systems, including preschool, to promote information sharing and evaluation as students move across systems.

First 5 California supports two autism pilot program bills, which were introduced in response to recommendations from the California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism

Report released last year.

SB 1475 (Torlakson) would require the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to establish a two-year pilot project to provide methods, instruments and systems of care between regional centers and school districts for the early identification and assessment of children 0 to 5 years of age with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The bill would establish the pilot project only after DDS applies to, and obtains funds from, First 5 California and/or other sources.

SB 527 (Steinberg) would require DDS to partner with at least one regional center to implement a two-year ASD Early Screening, Intervention, and Treatment pilot program in at least three key geographic areas. The pilot program would establish best practices for early screening, diagnosis, referral and treatment for children with ASD. The bill would also require DDS to establish an advisory committee of stakeholders to assist in coordinating the pilot program, and directs DDS to apply to First 5 California and/or other sources for funding.

First 5 California supports two important preschool reform bills, SB 1629 (Steinberg), which would establish a commission to propose a preschool quality improvement system, and AB 2759 (Jones), which would streamline and consolidate the state's existing preschool system. First 5 California is named as a possible funding source to cover the costs of the proposed commission.

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First 5 Partners with Mervyns at ChildSpree Events



First 5 California and several county commissions partnered with California-based retailer Mervyns at in-store events geared toward children and families throughout the state on July 19.

These "ChildSpree" events provided underserved children with free and discounted back-to-school

clothes and backpacks to boost their confidence for the first day of school and beyond. Some stores also featured mini-health fairs.

To help spread First 5 messages about health and nutrition, First 5 California provided bilingual nutrition-inspired placemats, growth charts and posters to all participating stores. Fresno, San Mateo, Kern and San Diego county commissions also provided giveaways, such as parent resource guides, First 5 pens, and English and Spanish-language *Kits for New Parents*. Additionally, First 5 Kern grantees helped provide dental screenings, immunizations, health checkups and health insurance enrollment assistance at their local Mervyns' health fair.

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San Joaquin County Showcases School Readiness Summer Activities



Silvia Arroyo, kindergarten teacher at Delta Island, Mike Fuller, administrator of First 5's Office of Healthy Development, Silvia Flores, First 5 school readiness co-lead, Harrold Brandi, school readiness program specialist, Cynthia LeLaurin, first grade teacher at Delta Island and the students at Delta Island during the School Readiness site visits.

San Joaquin County Commission Executive Director Lani Schiff-Ross hosted First 5 California staff on a visit to select School Readiness programs throughout the county. Staff observed two summer Kindergarten Bridge classrooms with children actively involved in learning skills that prepare them to succeed in school. Children at

the Delta Island site actively engaged in storytime while children at the El Dorado site worked intently in small groups. Parents feel it is so worthwhile for their children to participate that some even overcome the barriers of distance and the high cost of gasoline by waiting at the school while their children attend. "It's a good program and the children learn a lot," said one of the parents.

Staff also accompanied parent educators on two home visits where they provided training to help engage parents in healthy development activities with their children. Staff observed the parent educator work with the mother of an infant on language development while also checking for hearing deficits. At the second site staff observed a parent working with her toddler on activities that develop eye-hand coordination and fine motor skills. "What I learn is helpful for all my children," the mother said.

The visit provided a great opportunity to familiarize First 5 California staff with the various school readiness activities and the challenges of providing services in both rural and urban parts of the county.

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Special Needs Project Late Bird Meeting

On July 16, First 5 California and First 5 Association staff met with the executive directors from Special Needs Project (SNP) counties to discuss upcoming project-wide events. The group discussed the upcoming October Special Topic Symposium and inter-jurisdictional meetings. The symposium will be held October 28-29 in Southern California and the focus will be sustainability. Dean Fixsen, a national expert on sustainability, is scheduled to present.

Inter-jurisdictional meetings are also in the planning stages. Meeting participants may include other state agencies, as well as county commissions and will focus on exploring factors supporting wider implementation of SNP-related activities, such as universal developmental screening. This would include integration of

knowledge and practices emerging out of other state and national initiatives and projects.

The next meeting between SNP executive directors, First 5 California and the First 5 Association is scheduled for September 16 in Sacramento.

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Smoke Free Cars Fact Sheet Included in *Kit for New Parents*



First 5 California has partnered with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to inform California parents of the dangers of secondhand smoke. A Smoke-Free Cars fact sheet is now included in every *Kit for New Parents*. The fact sheet is currently available in English and Spanish.

First 5 California is working with the CDPH to produce the fact sheet in Asian languages to be included in the soon-to-be launched Asian-language *Kits*.

The partnership is the result of Health & Safety Code Section 118948 which bans the smoking of any cigarette, pipe, or cigar in a moving or parked vehicle while a youth younger than the age of 18 is present. The law took effect January 1, 2008.

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Birth to Five Peer Advocacy Roundtable

First 5 California joined the Birth to Five Peer Advocacy Roundtable (PAR) convened by the Ounce of Prevention Fund and funded by the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and an anonymous foundation. This forum is a national alliance that brings together state-level advocates who are engaged in advancing strategic, coordinated and sustained

advocacy efforts to increase investments in high quality, research-based early childhood development services for at-risk infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families.

In July, Sarah Neville Morgan, deputy director of Program Management, and Commissioner Molly Munger, co-director of the Advancement Project, participated in a PAR meeting in Chicago along with 10 other states. Participants shared policy innovations, lessons learned to date and challenges across states in different stages of designing or implementing policies and funding streams to support high-quality programs for at-risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers. The role of Early Head Start as a framework for state investments to enhance the quality of services for at-risk infants, toddlers and their families was discussed in addition to the critical elements of the science of early childhood development, particularly the important role of children's earliest relationships as a foundation for learning and school readiness.

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Get It While It's Hot – First 5 California DVDs Available

As a reminder, the First 5 California "For the Children" DVD is a valuable resource that provides an overview of First 5 California, its mission and key resources. These DVDs are available for you to distribute to stakeholders, grantees and other interested parties. Please contact the First 5 County TA hotline at (310) 552-4101 or f5countyta@rogerspr.com to request the DVDs.

To help further spread First 5 messages, we've also posted "For the Children" to YouTube. The video can be viewed at the following link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4RNm9jwSCA&feature=related>

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Hands-on Health Van Schedule Reminder



The Hands-on Health mobile van is on the road again. You can view the Phase 6 schedule for this nutrition-themed tour on First 5 California's Web site at www.ccfc.ca.gov.

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County Fund Distributions

The Monthly Distributions for Fiscal Year 2007/08 are available on the First 5 California Web site at www.ccfc.ca.gov/commission/fiscal.asp. The report titled "Disbursement to Counties" provides current information on the total funds to date authorized for release by First 5 California to First 5 county commissions.

Since the release of the July County Connection, the following revenues and disbursements were authorized and submitted to the State Controller's Office for release to counties: July 2008 Tax Revenues; FY 07/08 State Surplus Money Investment Fund earnings; final disbursement for the \$200K augmentation to the eight smallest counties; and Health Access reimbursement.

For questions regarding tax revenue, please contact Sandy Beck at (916) 263-1018, or by e-mail at sbeck@ccfc.ca.gov. For questions regarding program funding, contact your assigned program consultant.

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Evaluation Technical Assistance

The Research and Evaluation Team held a technical assistance conference call on July 23.

The notes from this call and information about accessing the conference call recording are on the First 5 California Web site under [Statewide Evaluation](#). Please check the Web site for details regarding the next technical assistance conference call scheduled for Thursday, August 21 from 10:00-10:30 a.m.

If you have any evaluation questions or if you need assistance with PEDS, please e-mail evaluation@ccfc.ca.gov.

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Annual Report Training

An in-person Annual Report training is scheduled for August 12 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. in Sacramento.

Another three Web-based trainings will occur during the last two weeks of August. Please check the schedule at <http://www.first5eval.com/reportingtools.htm>

For registration for either in-person or Web-based trainings please e-mail evaluation@ccfc.ca.gov.

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